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SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF CLASSES IN A MIDDLE WESTERN COMMUNITY*

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INTRODUCTION

THIS PAPER is concerned with a description of a series of cultural characteristics associated with four strata of the social structure in a Middle Western community of some 10,000 population,[1] which we shall hereafter call "Elmtown."[2] Elmtown is an all white community located near the center of the corn belt on a rich glaciated plain bisected by a navigable river. Its highly mechanized agricultural activities are integrated around corn and hogs, with the production of small grains and soy beans as secondary crops. Coal mines and three large factories give the community an industrial as well as an agricultural base.[3] Elmtown is the countyseat of "Home" County, and the only town in the county with a population above 2,500. All types of retail and repair businesses, services, and professions common to a prosperous countyseat town of this size are found here. In addition, it has a locally-owned daily newspaper, hospital, and a central high school.

Elmtown's social structure is composed of five strata[4] whose members understand with varying degrees of precision how each ranks in the hierarchical order. Assignment to a given stratum or class within the social structure appears to be dependent upon the possession and expression of a constellation of culture traits that are evaluated by the members of the community as appropriate to that particular stratum.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The data used in this paper were collected from two different sources. On the one hand,

* Adapted from a paper given before American Sociological Society at the annual meeting, December 28-30, 1946, Chicago, Illinois.

[1] The town's population was about 6,200 in 1941; rural farm and rural non-farm population comprised the remainder, 3,800, and was distributed over the 160 square miles of communal area.

[2] Materials discussed here are taken from an extensive study of 735 adolescents of high school age focused on the relationships between the behavior of the adolescents and the position their families occupy in the social structure of the community. The field work was completed between June, 1941 and December, 1942.

This study was made possible by a Post Doctoral Research Training Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council in 1941-42, and grants-in-aid from the Graduate School, Indiana University, which are hereby gratefully acknowledged.

[3] The largest factory normally employed (1939-41) between 450 and 600; the next sized one 200 to 250; and the smallest 40 to 50 persons.

[4] The terminology used here is that developed by Kingsley Davis, "A Conceptional Analysis of Stratification," *American Sociological Review*, 7: 309-321, Je. 1942. Also see Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore, "Some Principles of Stratification," *American Sociological Review*, 10:242-249, Ap. 1945.

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the stratification was accomplished by a rating procedure developed in the community;[5] on the other, the materials discussed under each class were collected directly from the families concerned, and sources other than the raters by the use of schedules, interviews, and other appropriate field techniques. The scores essential to the stratification of the families of the 735 cases included in the study are presented in Table I.

TABLE I. MEAN RATE(D) SCORES OF CLASSES, NUMBER OF RATERS, AND NUMBER OF CASES BY CLASS

Class	Scores[2]	Mean Rated Score	A.D.[3]	No. of Raters	Mean No. of Raters	No. of Cases
I[1]	.51–1.50	1.05	.04	21	21.0	4
II	1.51–2.50	1.93	.16	23	14.3	31
III	2.51–3.50	2.91	.25	20	13.4	158
IV	3.51–4.50	4.17	.37	26	12.1	312
V	4.51–5.50	4.71	.21	22	10.5	230

[1] The data on families in Class I are combined with Class II hereafter in the tabular materials.

[2] Persons assigned to each class by each rater were given a weighted score. The weights used were Class I, 1; Class II, 2; Class III, 3; Class IV, 4; Class V, 5. The interval is the theoretical range of scores, except for Classes I and V, where the functional intervals were only one-half of the theoretical range; that is, 1.50 to 1.0 and 5.00 to 4.51.

[3] Average deviation was calculated from the mean.

In the following description of the characteristics associated with each class, a classes, but with how fruitful the number used may be in understanding the organization and function of the community as a sociological entity.

[5] 31 Raters placed the families of the 735 adolescents in the social structure. The technique followed differs from the rating devices used by a number of sociologists in the past decade in that it was based on the use of a standardized Control List of 20 families. See: Wilson Gee, "A Qualitative Study of Rural Depopulation in a Single Township: 1900-1930," *American Journal of Sociology*, 33: 210-221, Se. 1933; Carl Frederick Reuss, "A Qualitative Study of Depopulation in a Remote Rural District: 1900-1930," *Rural Sociology*, 2:66-75, Mar, 1937; George A. Lundberg, "The Measurement of Socio-economic Status," *American Sociological Review*, 5:29-39, Fe. 1940; Edgar A. Schuler, "Social and Economic Status in a Louisiana Hills Community," *Rural Sociology*, 5:69-87, Mar. 1940; Harold F. Kaufman, *Prestige Classes in a New York Rural Community*, Memoir 260, Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station, Ithaca, New York, 1944, 3-46; Harold F. Kaufman, "Members of a Rural Community as Judges of Prestige Rank," *Sociometry*, IX, 71-85, Fe. 1946. Detailed procedures used are described in a forthcoming monograph.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FOUR STRATA

Class II[6]

Almost exactly one-half of the families in Class II have achieved their positions through their own efforts (the remainder have inherited them), but a further rise is virtually impossible as their origins are too well known and not enough time has elapsed between the start of their ascent and the present to accord them recognition within Class I. Psychologically, Class II persons are aware of the prestige differential between themselves and Class I. Nevertheless, they attempt to identify themselves with it in every possible way and exaggerate the social distance between themselves and Class III.

Income is earned largely by the male head who actively follows a profession, operates a family-owned business, industry, or farm,

[6] Class I is omitted here since only four families came from this stratum.

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or is engaged as a salaried executive in an enterprise owned by Class I families. (See Table III) Family income may be supplemented by income from a farm or two, securities, perhaps some rental houses.[7] Most, but seldom all, family income is spent on daily living. Security rather than wealth appears to be the economic goal. They were successful enough in the depression years to avoid all types of direct public assistance. All families had commercial and savings accounts in the local banks. In a crisis bank credit is available and used when necessary. Another important point is that lawyers are used extensively in normal business activities rather than in a crisis only.

Class II focuses its attention upon the aggressive manipulation of economic and political processes; consequently, its members are hyperactive in the power wielding associations, such as Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Masons, country club, and the major political parties. The women are as active as the men within their own sphere. A considerable proportion of the working day of many men and women is donated to community affairs without the donors receiving or expecting any direct, tangible compensation for their efforts other than the pleasure derived from the manipulation of human relationships in a controversial situation. As the outwardly prominent prestige bearers of community leadership, they are generally respected by the bulk of the population who look to them for community betterment. Few people realize these overt community leaders may be controlled, and often are, from behind the scenes by Class I persons.

All of these families paid personal property taxes, 90 per cent owned real estate, and 80 per cent owned the home they lived in. The town dwellers lived in the two highest ranking residential areas (Table II), with 54 per cent in the "400" and 46 per cent in the "Old Residential" area. The homes, while not as large as those of Class I, are interspersed in the same areas. They are

TABLE II. ECOLOGICAL AREA AND CLASS FOR FAMILIES RESIDING IN ELMTOWN

Ecological Area[1]	Class			
	I+II	III	IV	V
"The 400"	15	26	3	0
"Old Residential"	13	57[3]	26	0
"The East End"		2	12	4
"Down by the Mill"		6	46	21
"The Mill Addition"		7	54	21
"Down by the Canal"		7	58	75
"North of the Tracks"		3	21	22
"Below the Canal"		0	5	48
Total	28[2]	108	225	191

$\chi^2 = 283.6807$, $P < .01$
$C = .59$ $\bar{C} = .73$[4]

[1] Ecological areas are arranged in order of prestige value.

[2] Cases in Class I and II are not included in the chi square analysis or the coefficient of contingency.

[3] These cells were combined in the chi square analysis.

[4] C=Coefficient of Contingency. $\bar{C}$=coefficient of contingency corrected for broad grouping by formula given in Thomas C. McCormick, *Elementary Social Statistics*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1941, p. 207.

TABLE III. OCCUPATIONAL GROUP OF FATHER BY CLASS

Occupational Group	I+II[1]	III	IV	V	Total
Professionals and Proprietors	21	41	23	8	100[2]
Farm Owners	9	26	2	—	
Clerical	3	18	8	—	44
Sales	2	10	6	2	
Skilled Craftsmen		37	54	31	
Semi-skilled Machine Operators		2	44	17	185
Farm Tenants		20	54	9	83
Services		3	25	16	288
Unskilled		1	96	147	
Total		158	312	230	700

$\chi^2 = 293.0819$ $P < .01$
$C = .55$ $\bar{C} = .68$

[1] Classes I and II are not included in the chi square analysis.

[2] Cells combined in chi square analysis.

[7] Annual family incomes ranged between $3,000 and $10,000, with the mode at $4,500 and the mean at $4,650. These are 1941 figures.

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well kept, and furnished nicely. An automobile is a necessity and custom decrees it shall be a new one, preferably large, but not necessarily so; and in excellent repair.

Class II wives are homemakers and the family's social secretary.[8] Their homes are well-managed and run with the help of one general servant or with hourly services of a cleaning woman. Although their homes are a source of pride, an ambitious wife must not allow her home interests to out-weigh her community activities. Their community activities generally are arranged to take place in the afternoons; only occasionally is the wife expected to be out in the evening, since this is the time the husband will be free from his occupational restrictions. However, demands on the husband's evenings are so numerous, he is home only a few nights a week. Thus, the home tends to be a service station and a place of relaxation on week-ends.

Approximately four out of five families come from pioneer American stock. The remainder trace their origins directly to Norwegian, German, and Irish elements who have lived in the area for three generations; no ethnic groups are represented.

Marriage occurs in the middle twenties between persons of approximately the same educational and economic backgrounds. Since Class II is upwardly mobile, marriages with Class I persons are preferred by II's but not by I's. Marriages between equals are approved, those between a II and a III are not, but they are tolerated when they occur. Few marriages occur below this level. Marriage is for life, not until divorce breaks it. Children are expected and, in most cases, desired and planned; thus, families are small in size.[9] The mother is confined in a hospital in a distant city and cared for by a specialist; the local hospital is seldom used. Parents strive to rear their children properly and to give them advantages they may not have had themselves. The children expect their parents to assist them in reaching and consolidating a desirable future. The boys are headed for business or a profession. The girls are steered toward a desirable marriage after an education has been secured.

Church affiliation and active participation in religious affairs are emphasized. Class II is relied upon by the ministers for lay leadership in church activities. Religious goals are achieved through church work, such as dinners, welfare drives, Sunday School, missionary societies, and young people's affairs, instead of through large pecuniary pledges as is the rule in Class I.

The adults of Class II are the most highly educated persons in the community (Table V). Education is viewed as a requisite to success in business, and indispensable in the professions. The college educated males are concentrated in the large professions, only a few are in business. The non-college men are all in business enterprises of one kind or another. Those who achieved success without a college education admit the lack of it, often in an indirect way; and indicate, none too subtly, they believe they could have gone much farther if they had been better educated. Both college and non-college parents emphasize to their children the need for a college education.

Class II families do not have the time or the money to travel extensively, but they usually make a few trips each year to a neighboring city to shop, to attend the theater or an inter-collegiate football game. Their vacations are spent in automobile trips to various parts of the country or in a rented cabin at one of the northern lakes. The younger children go to summer camp for a few weeks, but the older boys work in the fields or in the town's stores. The adults make only limited use of public recreational facilities, such as parks and playgrounds, as they have access to the country club.[10] Almost every Saturday night, there are get-togethers in the homes where the numerous cliques of husbands and wives drink, eat, play cards, talk freely, and relax from the strains of daily life.

[8] Only 1 wife out of 31 was gainfully employed.

[9] The mean was 2.3 per family; the range from one to four.

[10] Eighty-five per cent belonged.

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Class III

Class III adults have strong feelings about their position in the social structure. Above them they see the Is, who they realize are much higher in prestige because of their wealth, lineage, and way of life. Likewise, they know the IIs occupy a position superior to their own, but a position that rests on different bases: dignified occupations, more income, higher education, and leadership in the prestige-giving activities—traits they too possess, but not in such generous amounts. The cavalier treatment they receive from IIs in community activities and the fact that IIs identify themselves psychologically with Class I, and many times act as its agents in community enterprises builds resentment among IIIs toward the IIs rather than the Is. IIIs look down upon IVs as "the common man," but they do not condemn or scorn them as many IIIs trace their immediate background to this stratum. Proportionately, there probably has been more upward mobility in this stratum than any other in Elmtown. Mills found evidences of the same thing in Central City.[11]

Income is derived from profits, fees, and salaries earned by both the father and the mother.[12] The men largely own and operate small retail businesses, own medium sized farms, operate as large tenants,[13] or pursue the lesser professions. Many are highly skilled craftsmen, a considerable number are foremen. Others are clerks in the mill offices, the banks, and other businesses. One-sixth of the wives were gainfully employed outside the home largely as small professionals, some operated small businesses, such as corner groceries, tobacco, and dress shops.

All families maintained commercial accounts and three out of four had savings accounts. Bank credit was available to those who had savings accounts, insurance policies, and owned real property. One-fifth however, did not have bank credit and resorted to the local small loans broker to tide them over a crisis. Class III families invest their small savings in real estate, insurance, or speculative enterprises, only to lose much of it to financial sharpers. Lawyers are not consulted as guides to business activities before action is taken, but afterwards when difficulty arises.

IIIs strive to live in the better residential areas and, in large part, they succeed (Table II). Sixty-one per cent of the homes are owned.[14] Class III families have sufficient income for the conveniences and comforts of life, possibly part-time help, money for a two weeks' vacation each year, popular magazine subscriptions, automobiles, and other externals of a successful standard of living that may be typified as comfort without luxury. Home furnishings tend to be uniform in quality, similar in price, and standardized as to the kind of articles in a room, one might almost say the way they are arranged.

Descendents of the ethnic groups that settled in Elmtown a half century and more ago are represented disproportionately in this stratum.[15] Since ethnic background is connected directly with religious affiliations in most families, the Catholic and Lutheran churches claim large blocks of Class III people. The distribution of religious affiliation in the several classes is shown in Table IV.

Church activities, such as guilds, study groups, missionary societies, and welfare organizations are kept alive, in large measure, by Class III women. Church attendance and church work are major functions in their

[11] C. Wright Mills, "The Middle Classes in Middle-Sized Cities," *American Sociological Review*, 11:520-529, O. 1946.

[12] Family income ranged from $2,000 to $4,000 in 1941 with the mode at $2,800-$2,899, and a mean of $2,867.

[13] A medium sized farm owner usually operates his own farm. In size it ranges from 150 to 300 acres. A large tenant is one who operates 300 or more acres.

[14] Home ownership is almost universal among the small business and professionals, but only 43 per cent of the farm families were owners, and one-third of the foremen, salesmen, and service workers owned their homes.

[15] 30 per cent were of Norwegian descent, 20 per cent Irish, and 10 per cent German. No "Poles," however, had achieved a Class III station. The remaining 40 per cent traced their descent to American stock.

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TABLE IV. RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION BY CLASS

Religious Affiliation	Class				
	I+II	III	IV	V	Total
Federated[1]	20	26	16	1	63
Methodist	5	31	45	12	93
Lutheran	3	45	80	32	160
Catholic	3	35	57	48	143
Baptist; others[2]	3	12	72	71	158
No Affiliation	1	9	42	66	118
Total	35	158	312	230	735

$\chi^2 = 244.4379$ $P < .01$
$C = .50$ $\overline{C} = .58$

[1] Created by the official merger of the Presbyterian and Congregational groups, and the unofficial affiliation of local Episcopalians.

[2] Free Methodist, Pentacostal, Church of God, Christ Scientist, Pilgrim Holiness.

lives. While the women are twice as likely to be avid church workers as men, there is a significantly higher average attendance at church services among both men and women than in any other class.[16] Regular church attendance appears to confer a kind of moral respectability peculiar to Class III. These people along with the IIs run the activities of the socially desirable churches—Federated, Methodist, Lutheran, Catholic, and Baptist.

Marriage occurs a year younger than in Class II and the women give birth to their first child 18 months earlier in life than Class II. Class III women also have more children than Class II women;[17] practically all babies are delivered in the local hospital. Strict sexual fidelity is required of the wives, but the husbands are known, on occasion, "to play around with other women." The wives do not "run around with other men" to any appreciable extent, and they bitterly condemn a woman who does. Class III is not as well educated as the higher classes; moreover, there is a distinct difference in the amount of education received by the men and women. (See Table V).

TABLE V. EDUCATIONAL LEVEL ATTAINED BY EACH PARENT BY CLASS

Education Completed	Class				
	I+II	III	IV	V	Total
A. *Fathers*					
College[1]	17	11	4	0	87
High School	11[2]	26	17	1	
9–11 Grades	2	26	32	6	66
8th Grade	5	74	158	67	582
5–7 Grades	—	13	61	80	
Less than 5th Grade	—	8	40	76	
Total	35	158	312	230	735
$\chi^2 = 244.2504$ $P < .01$ $C = .50$ $\overline{C} = .64$					
B. *Mothers*					
College[1]	18	63	10	—	166
High School	10[2]	33	28	4	
9–11 Grades	5	55	39	2	101
8th Grade	2	5	174	70	468
5–7 Grades	—	1	42	99	
Less than 5th Grade	—	1	19	55	
Total	35	158	312	230	735
$\chi^2 = 444.6439$ $P < .01$ $C = .62$ $\overline{C} = .84$					

[1] Includes all formal training beyond high school, such as college, university, professional, and vocational courses. It ranged from 6 months to 8 years in length.

[2] Figures combined for chi square analysis.

It has often been observed that Americans are joiners; this is particularly true in Class III where membership in many associations, implemented by active participation, confers high prestige within the class, to be elected to an office, or to be on a committee adds a few additional cubits. The most coveted memberships are the country club and Rotary for most of their members come from

[16] Each minister rated the church activity of each family. These ratings were analyzed by chi square for significance of difference and association. For father's church activity with a 20 cell table and 18 degrees of freedom $X^2 = 239$; the coefficient of contingency for the raw scores was .49; when corrected for broad groupings it was .55. The contingency table for the mother's activity had 20 cells and 18 degrees of freedom, $X^2 = 350$; the coefficient of contingency, uncorrected was .57, corrected .66.

[17] The mean size of Class III families was 3.6; standard deviation 1.9.

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Classes I and II.[18] Although IIIs could not "make the grade" to these relatively exclusive organizations in appreciable numbers, a few did, thus preserving the traditional belief that "one can go anywhere if he only has the stuff in him."

Although political activity is more widespread than in any other stratum, and from two-thirds to three-fourths of the several county offices are staffed by persons either elected or appointed from this class, these facts do not lead to the conclusion that Class III is politically powerful. On the contrary, it looks to Classes I and II for leadership. Many politically active IIIs resent their subordinate positions in the political system in view of the work they do, but their control is limited by all policy-making offices being in the hands of the higher classes.

Class III advertises its activities in the "Society" column of the local paper. When Mrs. John P. Doe gives a party or chairmans an activity, she is expected to "write a piece" for the paper which tells when and where the party occurred, who was there, the kind of entertainment offered, the refreshments served, and a detailed description of the decorations. If she does not, her friends are likely to inquire why she did not have a "piece in the paper." Afternoon affairs are advertised in this manner and, in most cases, mixed Saturday evening parties attended by cliques. Trips out of town for almost any reason are mentioned in the paper. IIIs might be said to be seekers after respectable personal publicity of any kind—to have one's name in the paper adds to one's prestige. Class I persons, on the other hand, avoid personal publicity; IIs do not seek it—as a rule, they try to keep from being mentioned too frequently in the local press.

Class IV

Class IV persons are aware of the inferior position they occupy in the prestige hierarchy, and they resent the attitudes most persons in the higher classes exhibit toward them. They discriminate sharply between "people like us" and the "socially ambitious" IIIs who they believe "put on airs" they do not rightfully deserve. Conversely, they are convinced Vs are inferior to themselves because they live in hovels and shacks, are dirty, immoral, and do not "try to get ahead." Consequently, a self-respecting IV avoids contact with Vs whenever possible. On the whole, Class IV people consider themselves to be "the backbone of the community." The higher ranking classes do not expect community leadership from Class IV, but they do expect them to work, produce, pay taxes, vote right, pay their bills, and buy the things they need locally while the higher classes provide the direction and reap the profits from their efforts.

Class IV members are employees who work for wages day after day on the farms, in the mines, the mills, and the shops of Elmtown.[19] Although class folkways indicated the family should be supported by the father, 30 per cent of the mothers were gainfully employed outside the home either as supplementary or chief breadwinner in occupations that carry little prestige and low hourly or weekly wages.[20] Their income was large enough to provide the necessities of life, a few comforts, but few, if any, luxuries. Family income was spent as it was earned; little was left over for "a rainy day." Family possessions were limited to a few clothes, household goods, and a car. However, 25 per cent did not own an automobile, and only 35 per cent either owned or were buying a home.[21] Thirty-five per cent had small

[18] 15 per cent of the country club's membership and 10 per cent of Rotary came from Class III families. However, 84 per cent of the Lion's Club membership was drawn from the III fathers. The picture was similar for the exclusive women's organizations.

[19] The chances were 12.5 to 1 against a Class IV father owning a business. When he did, it was a very small one, as defined by Dun and Bradstreet's *Registry* for Elmtown, May, 1941. A very small business is therein defined as one with a value between $500 to $2,000.

[20] Annual family incomes ranged from $800 to $2,700, with the mode at $1,500 to $1,599 and a mean of $1,541.

[21] The point should be made here that these families were in the prime of life; the mean age of the father was 45.5 years and the mother 42.1 years. These families had all been established 15 years or more.

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commercial bank accounts and 17 per cent had savings accounts. The commercial bank accounts were limited largely to the farmers, little business men, and the craft and skilled workers. Laborers and service workers had commercial accounts in but 11 per cent of the cases. Bank credit was available to approximately two families out of five. The local small loans broker acted as the credit agency for families who did not have bank credit.

Although many families were on relief during the worst years of the depression in the 1930's, specific data were not available in the county and it was not considered advisable to ask the families directly about their relief experiences. The Supervisor of the poor, between January 1937 through December 1941, gave township relief to 8 per cent of the families for periods varying from one month to three years. None of these cases involved "total relief." On the contrary, the relief given acted as a subsidy to a family in dire need that could not get help elsewhere. No family in the higher classes found it necessary to "go on relief."

All ethnic elements are found in Class IV. In Elmtown proper their homes are found in all residential areas, as Table II shows, but they are largely excluded from the best residential area by economic factors, and they avoid the area "Below the Canal" as being beyond the pale of respectability.

The family pattern is sharply different from that found in the higher classes. Marriage between class equals in the rule, although a small minority marry one class up or down. Males marry in their very early twenties and females in the late teens. Children normally are born from 9 to 18 months after marriage,[22] and more are born per family than in Class III.[23] Also, the family is broken by divorce, desertion, or death twice as often as in III.

The mother does her own housework with the aid of the children even though she may be gainfully employed part or full-time. There is no help except in an emergency, such as childbirth or illness; even then, it is dispensed with as soon as possible. The wife and mother's role in the community is encompassed by domestic duties. She is judged by the way she keeps her house, dresses her children, and manages the family budget. The community does not expect these women to join the Women's Club or other social organizations and they are discriminated against if they have ambitions along this line. The men are judged by how well they provide and by their moral actions, not by their business or organizational contacts.

Formal educational experience is limited almost exclusively to elementary and high schools. The Class IV adult might be characterized as literate, but not educated. (See Table V).

Many families claimed they had neither time nor money to support the churches, and one-third indicated hostility toward religion for one reason or another. Fourteen per cent had no affiliation with a local church, and out of those who did, two-thirds of the fathers and one-half of the mothers did not attend church services. These people claimed to be church members, but by the practical test of whether they actually participated in church activities, they were not.[24] This class may be as devout as the higher classes, but its members do not work on church boards, committees, and societies. When they do, especially in the high prestige churches, they are most likely to be found in menial positions. For instance, the chances are about 20 to 1 that an active Class IV woman in the Methodist Church, let us say, will be found in the kitchen at a church dinner rather than on the planning committee for the affair.

[22] 55 per cent of Class IV mothers gave birth to their first child before they were 20 years of age, whereas only 19 per cent of the Class III mothers were in this category.

[23] The mean number was 4.3 per family; range 1-10, standard deviation 2.2.

[24] Twenty-four per cent of fathers and 19 per cent of the mothers were completely unknown to the ministers of the churches with which they claimed they were affiliated.

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Leisure is limited for both men and women to the hours outside the daily, weekly, and yearly work routines. Approximately, three leisure hours out of four are spent at home listening to the radio, looking over the local paper, "working around the place," "fixing things up," and, for the men especially, cleaning and repairing the car. There is very little reading of magazines, books, or newspapers. Outside the home, recreation occurs in public or semi-public places. The most popular spot, visited by the average family once a week, is the motion picture theater. Visiting friends and relatives is also a very popular pastime. People meet informally on the street and stop to visit when the weather permits; if it does not, they congregate in the grocery, ten cent, and hardware stores. On a warm Saturday evening, Main Street swarms with people from the two lower classes who visit along the sidewalks and curbs. The family does not travel for travel's sake, as is often the case in the higher classes. An extended trip may be made for a definite purpose, such as visiting a relative, but these trips are not viewed as pleasures in themselves, but a means to renew family ties.

Intimate association in cliques is limited almost exclusively to intra-class relationships as IIIs avoid clique ties with IVs, and IVs, in turn, avoid Vs. Clique activities are highly informal and consist of visiting back and forth between couples in the evening, Sundays, and holidays rather than planned parties and dinners with drinks, games, and polite conversation as their central focus. Clique relations are more definitely on an age and sex basis, and more leisure time is spend by adults with their own sex in various clique activities than in the higher classes.

Periodically, attention is focused very briefly on some person who has committed a crime. This occurs more frequently in Class IV than in III, for 13.8 per cent of the fathers had been convicted in local courts of offenses between 1934 and 1941, but only 4.4 per cent of the Class III fathers. None of the mothers in either class had been accused or convicted of an offense.

Class V

Class V occupies the lowest stations in the social structure. Its members are looked upon by the higher ranking classes as the "scum of the city." It is believed nothing beyond charity can be done for them, and only a minimum is justified since they show little or no inclination to help themselves. Class V persons realize they are "on the bottom" and they know they are discriminated against by the higher classes, but most of them do not have enough insight to realize why. Class V persons give the impression of being resigned to life in a community that despises them for their disregard of morals, lack of "success" goals, and dire poverty.

Family support comes from many sources. The father is the chief breadwinner in some three families out of five, but their earnings are meager.[25] Fifty-five per cent of the mothers were gainfully employed outside the home part or full-time as waitresses, dishwashers, cooks, washwomen, janitresses, cleaning women, and general unskilled domestic workers. Income from wages provides the families with just enough to obtain the meagerest necessities of life, supplemented by private charity and public relief.[26] Between 1937 and 1941, the private earnings of 52.6 per cent were supplemented by township relief at least one-fourth of each year.[27] Bank accounts and credit are non-existent and even the small loans broker has learned, as he said, "through experience to be careful with that class. Before I loan one of them a cent, I investigate carefully and make sure they own what they put up for security."

[25] Ninety-two per cent were unskilled and semi-skilled laborers or machine operators; none was a farm owner, eight were farm tenants, two were salesmen; and eight operated very small businesses, such as hauling coal from local mines, ash and trash hauling, repair and sales of old cars.

[26] Annual family income ranged from a low near $500 to a high of about $1,500. The modal income fell in the $800 to $899 bracket, with the mean at $842.

[27] This figure does not take into consideration federal subsidies, such as W.P.A. and N.Y.A. that prevailed in that period. Neither does it include private charity in its many forms.

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All population elements (American, German, Norwegian, Irish, and "Polish") are represented, but three families out of five (58 per cent) traced their ancestry to old American stock that came to Elmtown before the Civil War. In spite of popular belief, "the Irish element" has contributed less than 9 per cent to the ranks of Class V. The "Poles" are found here twice as frequently as would be expected by chance as measured by chi square; the Germans and Norwegians only one-third as frequently as we could expect if chance factors alone were operating.[28] Many families have lived in Elmtown as long as the "leading families." In their long history, they have achieved notorious histories. The unsavory reputation of an ancestor is remembered and often used as an explanation for present delinquency.[29]

Class V families are excluded from the two leading residential areas (Table II). They are found in the others, with large concentrations "north of the tracks" and "below the canal." Ethnic background acts as a selective factor within these areas. "Below the Canal" and "The Mill Addition" are populated almost exclusively by old American stock. "Down by the Mill" is "Irish heaven," whereas "North of the Tracks" is divided into "Norwegian" and "Polish" areas.

The family residence, a box-like structure of two or three rooms, is rented in four cases out of five (81 per cent). The few that are owned have either been inherited or built along the canal and in the tannery flats by their present owners. Although it is popularly believed these people buy cars rather than homes, only 57 per cent owned an automobile.[30]

[28] A chi square of 43.9513 was found with 9 degrees of freedom between ethnic antecedents and class. This is significant at the .01 level.

[29] The doctrine of "blood" used to explain the rise to eminence of Class I is used in the same way to justify the derogation of Class V. Such remarks as the following were made about these notorious families or some member of them, "blood will out," "you can't expect anything else from such people," "his great-grandfather was hung for killing a neighbor in cold blood!"

[30] 80 per cent were more than seven years old and only 5 per cent were under two years of age.

The family pattern differs sharply from that found in the other classes. Marriages are limited almost exclusively to class equals. For instance, in 61 out of 65 marriages where the class positions of the families were traced both partners were Class V (93.7 per cent); the other four involved the marriage of Class V with Class IV persons. Marriage takes place in the middle teens for the girls, and the very early twenties for the boys. In the present adult generation, 78 per cent of the mothers reported they had given birth to their first child before they were 20 years of age. Another trait that marks the family complex is the number of children produced by these women.[31] There is little prenatal or postnatal care of either mother or child. The child is delivered generally at home, usually by a local doctor, the county nurse, or midwife, but in the late 1930's, some expectant mothers entered the local hospital. Hospital deliveries, however, are very new to Class V and not widely diffused.

Death, desertion, separation, or divorce has broken more than half the families (56 per cent). The burden of child care, as well as support, falls on the mother more often than on the father when the family is broken. The husband-wife relationship is more or less an unstable one even though the marriage may be sanctioned either by law or conventional understandings between the partners. Disagreements leading to quarrels and vicious fights followed by desertion on the part of either the man or the woman is not unusual. There are few compulsive factors, such as neighborhood solidarity, religious teachings, or ethical considerations operating to maintain a stable marital relationship.

Formal educational experience is limited almost exclusively to the elementary school. (See Table V). It is easy to calculate that a generation ago the odds against a V boy finishing high school were 230 to 1; for the girls they were 57 to 1. It may seem surprising, but they have not improved.[32]

[31] The mean was 6.6 per mother, with a range from 1 to 13 and a standard deviation of 3.1.

[32] In 1941-1942, there were 6 freshmen and 2 sophomore boys, and 18 girls, 6 were juniors, and 3 were seniors, from Class V in the Elmtown High

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Religious ties are either very tenous or non-existent. Only 71.3 per cent of the families claimed any religious connections, and many of these were "in spirit" rather than in fact. More than 9 families out of 10 have no functional connections with any church.

Class V persons are isolated from organized community activities. A few men claimed membership in veterans' organizations, but they neither paid their dues nor attended meetings. Those who worked in the mill belonged to the union, the others did not belong to unions as the other shops were open; besides most of the men followed lines of work the unions had not organized.

Time has little value in the daily routine beyond the demands of the job. Since they do not participate in organized community affairs, hours off the job and during the periods of unemployment or lay-off are spent the way the person chooses without too much interference from neighbors. Their extensive leisure is spent in loafing around the neighborhood, in the downtown district, along the river, and at home. Intimate associations are limited in large measure within the class. Social life consists of informal visits between neighbors, gossip, petty gambling, visits to the cheaper theaters, "going to town," drinking in the home or public taverns, with now and again a fist fight. Since the family is organized loosely, the members usually go their own way in search of amusement or pleasure. The cliques are severely age and sex graded. Men associate with men and women with women, except in their ubiquitous sex activities.

The police, sheriff, prosecuting attorney and judge know these families from frequent contact through the years, whereas the ministers and school officials may be only slightly acquainted with them. Between 1934 and 1941, 8 per cent of the mothers and 46 per cent of the fathers had been convicted once or more in the local courts. Public drinking, disorderly conduct, family neglect, and sex offenses were the most frequent charges. Some were chronic offenders who were hauled into court a few weeks after they had either worked out a fine or served their previous sentence; others were single offenders. The group as a whole average 4.1 convictions each. The misdeeds of these people are publicized on the front page of the local paper and by word of mouth to such an extent that many people expect nothing better from them.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the data presented, certain tentative conclusions appear to be warranted. First, each of the five strata, as delimited by the procedures used, has a distinct subculture. Second, identification with a given class or stratum is dependent upon the possession of a constellation of appropriate traits. Third, the members of each class participate in community activities in significantly different ways from the members of other classes.

School. Two of the three senior girls graduated in June, 1942.

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